

TCP: The Mother of a Mutant

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Alara Rogers

My little girl is a mutant.

A few hours ago she came into the den while I was watching television, and said those words every mother dreads to hear, "Mom... I have something to tell you." My heart fell into my stomach, of course. Immediately I could think of half a dozen next sentences for that statement, none of them good. "I'm pregnant." "I was raped." "I'm a coke addict." "I've met a wonderful boyfriend and we're running away to Acapulco."

So the first thing I felt was relief when the second sentence actually _was_ "I'm a mutant."

She demonstrated how she could levitate herself. I was dizzy with relief, that that was all it was, and thrilled for her, that she could fly. And then it sank in what it _meant_.

I realized the danger she'd be in if people found out. I advised her to keep her powers hidden. She accused me of being afraid of her powers, and we got in a big fight. She started crying hysterically, and she ran out of the house. I chased after her-- and she flew away.

She's never done that before. Usually she cries hysterically, and we argue, and then we make up. Or I tell her to go to her room, and she does, and then I feel bad about it and call her back out so we can make up. She's never run away while I was calling to her, and I'd be angry if I weren't so afraid.

I have to talk to her when she gets back in. I have to make it clear, I'm not angry, I'm not afraid of her powers, I'm not upset that she's a mutant. I'm afraid for her. How could she think anything else?

My little girl is a mutant.

Show me a mother who doesn't think her daughter is wonderful and special and the best possible daughter to ever have existed, and I'll show you a woman who should never have had kids. But I've tried all my life to be objective. My daughter is pretty, but a lot of girls are pretty. My daughter is smart, but a lot of girls are smart. I tried to tell myself that my belief in her specialness, in her superiority to other people, was just what you'd expect, me being her mother. I tried to be-- not impartial, obviously I can't be impartial, but I tried to see her clearly.

And now I know. She really is special. She really does have a fantastic ability that hardly anyone else has. What can I feel but thrilled for her? She'll see things I could only dream of, have experiences ordinary people can only imagine. She can fly. The dream that drove Orville and Wilbur Wright to Kitty Hawk, the dream that drove Ikaros into the upper reaches of the sky, is my daughter's waking reality.

But like Ikaros, she might fly too high, too far, and be burned. And like Daedalos, all I can do, watching my child fly into the sun and risk being burned, is call out a warning.

Like Daedalos, all I can do is fear for her, for she'll never listen to me.

My little girl is a mutant.

I watch the news a lot. Every so often there's a crime story on some horrible atrocity committed against mutants. I remember when children were turning up dead in playgrounds with the word "MUTIE" painted on their dead bodies. And I thought that was horrible, of course, who wouldn't? And that the wastes of human flesh and blood who committed such a crime should be nailed into a box and have the box tossed into the Atlantic, preferably in shark-filled waters. It affected me the way tales of the Holocaust affected me, the way the history of witch trials affected me, the way stories of people being murdered by third-world dictators affects me. That is, these are horrible, horrible things, and I grieve for them the way any human should. But they aren't part of my life. They're a horror that happened to other people, and I can feel sorrow, but never fear.

Now I feel fear.

So she can fly. That's wonderful-- but it won't save her if some bigoted thug decides to put a bullet in her brain. It won't help her keep the friends she's got, it won't keep monsters in human form from

trying to blow up her locker or lynch her... or attack her here, in my home, where I have her two younger brothers to worry about too. And what if they're mutants? What if one of them turns green when he hits puberty? If she actually bothered to hide her mutancy, she could-- she looks perfectly normal, all that's different is that she can fly. What if one of them becomes an obvious mutant, and thus becomes a target? What about uncontrollable powers? You hear all the time about mutants who suddenly burst into flame in homeroom, or blow up a classmate's car. And if neither of her brothers have any problems like that, what about her own children? Mutants have mutant children, don't they? What if one of my grandchildren is born green, or something, and has to endure suffering for that for his or her entire life?

And none of my fears of genetics or uncontrollable powers is as strong as my fear for her, for the consequences if she doesn't hide. I've told her all her life she has to try to fit in, she has to at least fake it. Not because I care what the world thinks about her, but because if they don't like her, if they think she's too different, they'll crucify her. Here I was fearing the trouble she'd have because she doesn't like to wear makeup and because she can't be bothered to make small talk and because she's not very affectionate to the people that love her. And now I find out she's a mutant. Legally she isn't even defined as human, by some court decisions. People have been acquitted of murdering mutants, on the grounds that they were making a pre-emptive strike against the mutant's uncontrollable powers, like putting down a mad dog. How could people be so stupid? So hateful? But they are, I know they are, and I'm terrified.

I only want her to be safe. Why won't she listen to me?

My little girl is a mutant.

She accused me of fearing what she is. Damn right. But not because I have a problem with it. Not because I don't celebrate what she is, everything that she is. If we lived in a perfect world, I'd feel nothing but joy for her. But we don't-- we live in a world that kills mutants, just for being what they are. So of course I'm afraid of what she is-- it could get her killed!

She doesn't understand that. It's a principle with her. She's not going to hide being a mutant, because, she says, already her friends accept her for who she is and everyone else hates her anyway, so she doesn't expect people to change toward her. But they will. Teachers love her because she's studious and smart. How will they feel when she turns out to be a mutant? She's put up with dog feces in her school locker; what happens if someone plants a bomb? Or, even when I try to look at my fears realistically, to stop having waking nightmares about her death, what happens when it gets on her college application that she's a mutant? Colleges may have quotas for everything else, but not mutants. How's she going to get into a good school if she publicly admits to what she is? Who's going to hire a mutant? How will she ever have a future?

I'm not telling her to hide it because I'm scared of her. Baby, can't you understand that? If you've never understood that at any time in your life before, please, please understand it now. I'm not your enemy. I love you. I love everything that you are. But I want you to hide everything that you are, hide your true nature, hide

your powers... because it's the only way you're going to survive.

Because you're better than they are, and their petty jealous minds will do anything to bring you down.

When she comes back, I have to tell her. I have to make her see somehow.

My little girl is a mutant. And I love her. I love her.

I'll do anything to keep her safe.

If she'll only let me.

End
file.